

THE SISKIYOU DAILY NEWS



Health and Human Services: Kids' access to alcohol, tobacco still high

Posted Mar 17, 2017 at 9:34 AM

A press release from the Siskiyou County Health and Human Services Agency states that new research shows that in Siskiyou County, the availability of tobacco and alcohol products is reported to be higher than milk and fresh produce.

A press release from the Siskiyou County Health and Human Services Agency states that new research shows that in Siskiyou County, the availability of tobacco and alcohol products is reported to be higher than milk and fresh produce. These findings are part of new research, released March 8, on the availability and marketing of tobacco products, alcohol, condoms and healthy and unhealthy food options in California stores that sell tobacco.

On March 8, throughout California, health advocates held 13 press events to release results of the scientific survey, which is the largest of its kind, the SCHHSA press release states. The survey builds upon initial research released three years ago in March 2014 and provides insights into changes in the availability and

marketing of the studied products during this time. Information was collected in the summer of 2016 from more than 7,100 stores in all 58 California counties, including pharmacies, supermarkets, delis, convenience and liquor stores as well as tobacco-only stores.

“Overall, the findings show a continuing and alarming discrepancy in our county in the accessibility and marketing between products that promote a healthy lifestyle, and those that don’t,” said Cindy Fulcher, health educator. “Stores play a critical role in our community’s health, and this survey shows offerings and messaging are out of balance, tipping heavily toward unhealthy options. Our goal is to help re-calibrate the balance toward health.”

The survey found the following for Siskiyou County:

– In addition to selling cigarettes, 88 percent of stores sell “little cigars” or cigarillos, but only 59 percent of stores sold fresh fruits or vegetables. What’s more, 69 percent of stores sold a popular brand of “little cigars” individually for under a dollar, less than the cost of a candy bar.

– 24 percent of stores sold non or low-fat milk, but nearly 100 percent sell alcohol.

– 76 percent of surveyed stores sell condoms, but only 46 percent sell them on unlocked shelves.

– E-cigarettes saw a significant increase in Siskiyou County stores from the last time this survey was conducted, up more than 23 percent.

“The expanded availability of e-cigarettes is of particular concern and reflects the spike in use by teens and young adults in the last three years,” said Fulcher.

Another goal was to examine the accessibility and marketing of healthy and unhealthy products to youth.

Fulcher noted, “This survey found that our community’s youth are inundated with unhealthy messages and choices. We need to change what information and options our kids are exposed to and work to surround them with healthy choices and messaging instead.”

The survey found the following for Siskiyou County:

- Only 10 percent of stores advertised healthy products on their storefronts, but 76 percent of storefronts advertised unhealthy products. Sixty-three percent of stores near schools have storefront advertising for unhealthy products.

- More than 34 percent of stores place tobacco products or ads in kid-friendly locations, such as tobacco ads at ‘kid-level’ (three feet or below) or tobacco products near candy or toys.

- More than 17 percent of stores placed alcohol ads at “kid-level” or near kid-friendly items such as candy or toys.

- Ninety-five percent of stores sell flavored non-cigarette tobacco products, which often have kid-appealing flavors, such as grape, watermelon, chocolate, gummy candies and even breakfast cereals. Similarly, 88 percent of stores near schools also sell flavored tobacco products.

To combat these issues, Fulcher said, “Siskiyou County Tobacco Education Project is committed to continuing to work with local health advocates and partners to provide accurate information and help make the healthy choice the easy choice for Californians.”

Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community is a statewide campaign formed by tobacco prevention, nutrition, alcohol abuse prevention and STD prevention partners collaborating to improve the health of Californians by informing them about the impact of unhealthy product availability and marketing in the retail environment.

For state and county-specific data and more information on Healthy Stores for a Healthy Community, visit www.healthystoreshealthycommunity.com.